is a State subject. Under the existing law dealing with agricultural markets (APMC Act), the State Government alone is empowered to initiate the process of setting up of markets for agricultural commodities in notified areas. The processing industry cannot buy directly from the farmers. The farmer is restricted from entering into direct contract with any manufacturer as the produce is required to be canalized through regulated markets. These restrictions are acting as disincentive to farmers, trade and industry. The State Governments have, therefore, been advised to bring reforms in the APMC Act to allow direct marketing and contract farming and to permit setting up of competitive markets. Development of alternative competitive markets in private and cooperative sectors would provide freedom to farmers to sell their produce in the markets providing better prices/services.

(c) A model APMC Act has been circulated by this Ministry to all the States, to guide them in bringing changes in their respective APMC Act for the removal of all restrictions on direct marketing by the farmers. A reform linked Central Sector Scheme for Development/Strengthening of Marketing Infrastructure, Grading and Standardization has been approved to assist the development of agricultural marketing infrastructure in the States/UTs that amend the APMC Act on the lines suggested in the model law.

Losses in Fisheries and Aquaculture due to Tsunami

3873. SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that according to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) estimates, the losses in fisheries and aquaculture are put at US$ 520 million due to Tsunami;

(b) if so, the details thereof, and

(c) how this has affected our ecosystem?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTI LAL BHURIA): (a) The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) assessment of post Tsunami losses in fisheries and aquaculture are global in nature pertains to seven most affected countries including India. However, no specific figure or estimates are available for India as such as per FAO assessment.

(b) This includes replacement cost of US$ 161 million for lost or damaged fishing vessels, US$ 73 million for engines, US$ 86 million for fishing gear and over US$ 200 million on account of damages to fishery sector such as aquaculture, infrastructure, harbour, etc.

(c) The preliminary observation indicates that turbidity in near shore waters specially in the islands has increased, coral reefs impacted, mangrove and coastal forests have suffered heavy damages.

Cases against the Consumer Protection Act

†3874. SHRIMATI MAYA SINGH: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) the number of cases registered under the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 during the last three years;

(b) the number of cases thereof which have been settled;

(c) the steps being taken by Government for the protection of consumers; and

(d) the number of Non-Governmental Organisations, working in the field of consumer protection, failed to utilize the Governmental grants?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI TASLIMUDDIN): (a) and (b) As per the information provided by the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC), the state-wise details of the complaints filed and disposed of in the District Forums, State Commissions and the NCDRC for the last three years, are given in the Statement (*See* below).

(c) The important steps taken by the Govt. for the protection of consumers are as under:

(i) The Consumer Protection Act, 1986 has been amended recently in the year 2002 with a view to facilitate quicker disposal of complaints, enhancing the capability of redressal agencies, strengthening them with more powers, streamlining the

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.